

using the resources of the communities in the States in which the Federal Government is doing business and costing those taxpayers money because of their presence, I think they owe those States, and those counties and local governments, their fair share of the property tax burden.

Another important program funded through the Interior appropriations bill is the Bureau of Land Management Oil and Gas Management Office. This is the office that is responsible for the leasing and permitting of onshore oil and gas wells. Throughout the West, there are very long delays in processing these permits, solely because the Bureau of Land Management lacks the staff to do it.

I have been told that each month of delay getting these wells on the line means that 28 million cubic feet of gas is not reaching the market. I believe that is critical. It is important to the Western States, but it is critical to the overall good of this country. Again, I commend the chairman for seeing the need and addressing the issue in this particular bill. But it concerns me when one considers the constrained supply and high prices all of our constituents are facing. So I am hopeful that down the line, we will be able to find some additional funding for these activities.

A program that is new to the Interior appropriations bill this year is the State and Tribal Assistance Grant Program, often called STAG. Just over \$2.5 million in STAG funds will be going to Colorado. The nice thing about this program is that it is based on grants, so for those communities that have true needs, that money is going to be available to them.

This program helps communities around the country fund upgrades to their drinking water treatment systems. It is especially important to small communities that have severely aging infrastructure and are disproportionately impacted by increases in requirements and water standards. We have gone through a recent change in water standards that is having a disproportionate impact on some of the smaller communities that I represent in the State of Colorado.

I would also mention a number of projects that are funded throughout this bill that are important to me and to the State of Colorado. These projects are not locale-designated projects. In other words, not one community or one county necessarily benefits, but they do tend to benefit a larger geographical area. As I go through these, I think you will begin to understand what I am trying to accomplish.

We get a lot of requests as Members of the Senate from specific cities and specific counties wanting projects designated specifically for their area. But I have tried to keep these generally spread out because then the entire State of Colorado benefits. There are a lot of needs out there.

We set aside some money for the High Elk Corridor. It is a migration

route for elk, and it is important in central Colorado, so we have set some money aside for that. The Platte River fish recovery project—this is for the entire drainage system of the south Platte and also the north Platte. It affects, actually, more States than just Colorado. It is an attempt to restore endangered species within the drainage system so the Endangered Species Act doesn't come into play in a way that impacts property rights, which is a very important issue as far as Western States are concerned.

I also have some money here for the Upper Colorado Fish Recovery Program. This is the Colorado River drainage system. Not only does it help the State of Colorado, but other States that are on the Colorado River, because we are trying to sustain an endangered fish population in that river system so that our water users do not get disproportionately impacted.

We have some money in there to complete a conservation easement on the Banded Peaks Ranch, and funds for the Colorado Canyons conservation area. We want to help sustain the conservation efforts there.

It is projects such as these that benefit the public as a whole, and I am pleased we were able to secure funding for them.

Finally, before closing, I again thank the full committee chairman and ranking member, Senators COCHRAN and BYRD, and the majority and minority leader for bringing this bill to the floor so quickly. Again, I also recognize the diligent effort by Senator BURNS and his ranking member, Senator DORGAN. This is the first appropriations bill we have up on the Senate floor this year. It reflects their hard work and commitment to getting us through this session in a timely way.

I believe it is very important that Congress meet its responsibilities to pass funding bills before the end of the fiscal year. I think that continuing resolutions and omnibus bills tend to be messy, and an inappropriate way to go about fulfilling our responsibilities to fund the Federal Government. I am pleased we seem to be on track to pass the appropriations bills on time this year.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

AMENDMENT NO. 1010

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator VOINOVICH, I call up amendment No. 1010, which relates to Indian gaming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Montana [Mr. BURNS], for Mr. VOINOVICH, proposes an amendment numbered 1010.

Mr. BURNS. I ask unanimous consent the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds to take certain land into trust without the consent of the Governor of the State in which the land is located)

On page 254, after line 25, add the following:

SEC. 4. . None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to take land into trust on behalf of an Indian tribe for the specific purpose of gaming without the consent of the Governor of the State in which the land is located.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I think that is about the only amendment that we have to be offered in today's business. We have kind of run our trap lines. Senator DORGAN?

Mr. DORGAN. I don't know of any amendment also intended to be offered today. I do know we have had some colleagues talking to us about amendments they wish to offer on Monday, but at least on this side, I know of no amendments to be offered for the remainder of the day. My understanding about the amendment the Senator has just laid down on behalf of Senator VOINOVICH is we are not going to dispose of that amendment at this point. We have some issues we need to discuss. We will begin to think about action on that on Monday; is that right?

Mr. BURNS. That is correct. We will huddle on that, on this amendment and others that will be coming to the floor later on.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for as long as I continue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. I will not speak for a lengthy time, but I wanted to thank my colleague from Montana as he leaves. He will be back on Monday as we take up this bill again, and I look forward continuing to work with him. We put together a pretty decent bill.

As I indicated previously, this bill actually cuts by \$½ billion, slightly more, spending over the previous year. So it has been a chore to get this done because of the substantial cuts. But the Senator from Montana has been good to work with.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BURNS. I ask unanimous consent that we now have a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CUBA POLICY

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I do wish to mention two issues before we complete today. I talked a few moments ago about a soldier who is trying to see his sick children in Cuba. I put in a call to Secretary Snow to see if we can't make that happen. I will not go through all of that again. But, again, it is unbelievable to me that we are penalizing this soldier, who has earned a Bronze Star and is an American citizen who wants to see his sick child in